



# EPISCOPAL NEWS SERVICE

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# *news digest*

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97-1686D

## **Executive Council grapples with issues on the agenda of upcoming General Convention**

(ENS) The agenda of the Episcopal Church's Executive Council meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, January 27-30 was crowded with items directly related to decisions facing this summer's General Convention in Philadelphia--money, church structure, program priorities and sexuality.

In their opening addresses, Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning and Pamela P. Chinnis, president of the House of Deputies, quickly set the tone for the meeting in a complementary appeal for a new way to struggle with the potentially divisive issues facing the church.

Chinnis warned, "If we go to Philadelphia expecting a showdown with winners and losers, we'll certainly get one, and it will be a colossal folly resulting from a great shared delusion, a consensus of fear."

Introducing the report of the council's administration and finance committee, Bishop Don Wimberly of Lexington said that the committee will recommend to General Convention's committee on program, budget and finance a unified budget that includes a change in the funding formula from a graduated one to a flat 20 percent of diocesan income. Treasurer Steven Duggan presented a proposed budget of \$120.6 million for the 1997-2000 triennium, which calls for several cost-cutting measures to achieve balance.

"So much of the budget is already fixed that planning and flexibility is limited," Diane Porter, senior executive for program, told a program committee meeting. The only new initiative possible in the program area, she reported, is an expanded communications effort developed in response to diocesan visitations.

Council approved unanimously a statement on "Common Beliefs on Relationships and Appropriate Sexual Behavior" that will be forwarded to General Convention as a resolution. Ralph Spence of Montana, who submitted the statement, said that it sought to lay out commonly held assumptions about sexuality as a basis for the church's dialogue.



97-1687D

## Episcopal Life sets records in circulation and income

(ENS) "The bottom line is this--*Episcopal Life* is healthy and poised to serve the church in its future," Harry Denman of Kansas told members of the Executive Council at its January meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio.

As chair of *Episcopal Life's* board of governors, Denman traced the progress of the church's national newspaper since its first issue in April of 1990. In seven years, "there have been many changes in our publication which have marked its growth and development," he said.

Denman called the newspaper "the main communications link of any kind in our church," and said that he still harbors dreams that it could go into every home in the Episcopal Church, citing a 1995 resolution from the presiding bishop's Council of Advice asking diocesan bishops to adopt that goal.

Following the appointment of a marketing director in 1994, the number of diocesan partners who wrap their own newspapers around *Episcopal Life* has grown steadily. Denman said that with the addition of three more dioceses this spring, the partnership will include 21 dioceses, pushing circulation to nearly 220,000. It now stands at 201,300, an all-time high.

In 1995, total income--advertising and subscriptions--passed the \$1 million mark for the first time. Advertising revenues for 1997 are projected for about \$425,000, another record. Jerrold Hames, editor, said that the national church has recognized the newspaper as a priority by committing financial resources to its development. As income has risen, the subsidy provided by the church has decreased.

97-1688D

## Episcopal Church struggles to aid blizzard-stricken Indians in the Dakotas

(ENS) The dioceses of North and South Dakota are struggling to provide food and warmth for Indians suffering through the harshest winter in memory on the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota.

"This winter the snow started in October and never left," said the Rev. John Floberg, vicar of St. Luke's, Fort Yates and St. James', Cannonball, the two Episcopal churches serving the North Dakota side of the reservation. "We've had nine snowstorms or blizzards."

Snow accumulations up to five times normal levels has conspired with a tripling of the price of propane and the cutting of federal funds for weatherizing and homebuilding to create a federal disaster area on the reservation. "The need for fuel has eaten into all other resources," Floberg said. "Food has been taken off the table to pay for it."

The Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief issued two grants in early February, \$25,000 to South Dakota and \$20,000 to North Dakota.

Some of the North Dakota grant has gone to weatherize Floberg's food pantries and



stocking them with 28,000 pounds of food in preparation for increased demand over a longer period of time. Floberg said that once the primary need of food is addressed, the church will try to assist with an array of weather-related problems such as frozen water lines, broken hot water heaters, and the provision of better or additional heat sources.

97-1689D

## **Presiding Bishop signs call by religious leaders for campaign finance reform**

(ENS) Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning joined other religious leaders in signing a letter to Congressional members calling for campaign finance reform.

The present system of financing elections is "a major scandal," the letter states, with current laws permitting "the unfair influence of persons and groups with extraordinary wealth and allowing them access unavailable to the ordinary citizens."

The letter's signers' wrote that "as religious leaders, we believe in government's role in seeking justice for all people and in building the common good. Justice cannot be achieved unless the rules governing a democratic process are just and fair to all."

Members of Congress face an "inescapable duty," the letter asserts, to "protect the process of democracy," in which "a citizen's free vote defies the powers of money, social class and unequal access to the public media." While admitting that they are "aware of how difficult it will be to make substantial changes," the signers warned that "without substantial reform, we see further erosion in the public trust."

Representatives of the religious community, including the Episcopal Church, were scheduled to participate in press conference in Washington D.C., February 13, with Senators John McCain of Arizona, an Episcopalian, and Russ Feingold of Wisconsin, who are sponsoring campaign finance reform legislation.

97-1690D

## **Virginia Seminary revises policy on sexual behavior**

(ENS) In Virginia Theological Seminary's 1997-1998 student catalogue, a more general policy on expected norms of moral behavior will replace an earlier statement that explicitly forbade "sexual intercourse outside the bonds of marriage, adulterous relationships, and the practice of homosexuality."

By a vote of 31 to 3, January 22, the seminary's board of trustees adopted "A Call to a Holy Life," as "more in keeping with Anglican comprehensiveness than the previous statement and more in keeping with the biblical balance of the Christian tradition," wrote Bishop Peter James Lee of Virginia, the board's chair, and seminary Dean and President Martha J. Horne in a joint letter to alumni and seminary supporters.



The new statement notes that the seminary, located in Richmond, Virginia, "respects the policies regarding sexual behavior maintained by bishops and other ministers with authority over individual seminary faculty and students," and calls on members of the seminary community to be "wholesome examples of persons called to a holy life."

The statement goes on, however, to list expected characteristics of behavior such as "sexual discipline and responsibility," rather than particular sexual prohibitions.

In their letter, Lee and Horne explained that the previous policy "led to an excessive emphasis on matters of sexuality while the new statement provides a more demanding expectation of all faculty, trustees and students."

Under the new policy, Lee and Horne stated, "sexual issues need not bar one from admission." Admission criteria will be broadened, they said, "so that applicants will be considered according to whether the total balance of their lives gives promise for effective service in the church."

97-1691D

## **General Seminary dean leaving to head New Hampshire school**

(ENS) Bishop Craig B. Anderson, dean and president of The General Theological Seminary in New York City, announced February 6 that he will be resigning his position to serve as rector of St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire.

Anderson, who had been named as a possible candidate for either presiding bishop or bishop of the Diocese of New York, said that the move permits him to pursue his vocation as an educator while working directly to develop a new generation of leaders.

"We need to be identifying, raising up and recruiting young Episcopalians as leaders in the church and in society who have a concern for the common good," he said. "The people who come to St. Paul's are going to be those leaders."

The decision to leave General, where he has served for more than four years, comes at the end of "a long and prayerful period" of vocational discernment, he said. "Education has been a hallmark of my ministry in the church, and St. Paul's represents an enduring commitment I have had."

"GTS has been well served by its eleventh dean," said Bishop Mellick Belshaw, chairman of the seminary's board of trustees. "His accomplishments will benefit GTS for many years to come."

St. Paul's School, often called the flagship of Episcopal boarding schools, was founded in 1856 and now has a coeducational enrollment of more than 500 students from 48 states and 18 foreign countries, all of whom live at the school. Situated on a 2,000 acres in New Hampshire, St. Paul's has a faculty of 100 compared to General's 15. Anderson's position as rector will be comparable to that of headmaster at other schools.



97-1686

## **Executive Council grapples with issues on the agenda of upcoming General Convention**

by James Solheim

(ENS) The agenda of the Episcopal Church's Executive Council meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, January 27-30 was crowded with items directly related to decisions facing this summer's General Convention in Philadelphia--money, church structure, program priorities and sexuality.

The council was in friendly territory. The Diocese of Southern Ohio has "a tradition of strong commitment to the national church, giving more than has been asked in financial support," as Bishop Herbert Thompson, Jr., said in his welcome.

In their opening addresses, Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning and Pamela P. Chinnis, president of the House of Deputies, quickly set the tone for the meeting in a complementary appeal for a new way to struggle with the potentially divisive issues facing the church.

In a nation and a church where civility is under attack, Chinnis drew attention to the connection between civility and consensus, expressing a fear that "the civility that depended on shared experiences, interests and assumptions is stretched to the breaking point--and we feel very threatened."

### **Warfare or collaboration?**

Chinnis warned, "If we go to Philadelphia expecting a showdown with winners and losers, we'll certainly get one, and it will be a colossal folly resulting from a great shared delusion, a consensus of fear." As a result, she said, "we will short-circuit the legislative process and undermine the peace and unity of the church."

Chinnis invited council members to consider redefining the legislative process not as "civilized warfare" but rather as "collaborative exploration .... Suppose we suspend our convictions long enough to listen for new clues about the path ahead, allowing for some new consensus that might embrace our present contradictions." That kind of legislative process could be "the venue of the Holy Spirit's action within the church," she said. "Let us struggle to recover the civility of the pure in heart, knowing it is essential to our souls and to the life of the church."

### **Reconciliation or division?**

In his address from the chair, Browning said that the Councils of Advice serving him and Chinnis met recently to "talk about how the mind of the church could be expressed in the most creative, healthy possible way through our legislative process." Working with the assumptions that "we honor the legislative process and trust the working of the Spirit" and that "our General Convention is more than a legislative body," participants moved to "a heightened sense of positive expectation about our convention and a feeling that the decisions made there will be made carefully and faithfully."

Browning pointed to "some polarization" around the "tough issues" facing the



convention and even some misguided expectation that "one clear answer will emerge." The real question for Christians, he argued, is "Do you choose reconciliation or division?"

The church confronts three opportunities to make that choice, he said, on issues of "our understanding of stewardship, of our sense of the role of the church in our national life, and of our efforts against racism."

### **A vision of partnership**

Too many church members "have yet to capture a vision of the partnership we are called to at all levels in the life of the church" and that is affecting funding for the church's mission, Browning said. He chided those dioceses that are withholding funds "as a way of making a political statement." He said that they are guilty of "poor stewardship based on flawed theology," arguing that "Christian giving is not a sign of approval but a mark of love" and "withholding funds as a form of protest is contrary to our received understanding of what it means to live in a covenant community, a community where reconciliation is the way, not division."

Browning expressed "deep thanks for those in our church who have shown an unwavering commitment to peace and justice issues" because "without a quest for love, peace, justice and reconciliation, God's people will sorely suffer."

He called the "sin of racism ... the ultimate division" and said that first reports on the church-wide dialogues on racism are encouraging. "No matter what else we do within the life of our church, no matter how much we try to reflect the covenant community, no matter how many positive choices we make, as long as we are victims of our own racism everything else we do is tainted."

### **Tightening the budget**

Introducing the report of the council's administration and finance committee, Bishop Don Wimberly of Lexington said that the committee will recommend to General Convention's committee on program, budget and finance a unified budget that includes a change in the funding formula from a graduated one to a flat 20 percent of diocesan income.

The dioceses now paying more than 20 percent may be asked to continue that level of support to aid dioceses that will not be able to make the adjustment to a higher level immediately.

Treasurer Steven Duggan presented a proposed budget of \$120.6 million for the 1997-2000 triennium. To achieve balance, the budget calls for several cost-cutting measures: increased payout from the church's endowment, elimination of a subsidy for Episcopal Migrations Ministries, closure of the church's Philadelphia office, cuts in support for program, and other "efficiencies" on contracted services, the travel budget and the pension plan offered to lay church center employees.

Since the Episcopal Church Center operates in an "empowering mode" to assist mission at the local level, Duggan said that it is "destructive" to keep money at the local level as a protest, ignoring the "partnership." He also expressed his frustration with a budget that leaves so little room for the church's "worthy and vital mission activities."

The proposed budget does not "take into account any new directions from General Convention or a new presiding bishop," he warned. The presiding bishop also noted that



some of the Blue Book reports for General Convention call for additional funds that "could change this budget quite quickly."

### **No flexibility in program budget**

"So much of the budget is already fixed that planning and flexibility is limited," Diane Porter, senior executive for program, told a program committee meeting. The only new initiative possible in the program area, she reported, is an expanded communications effort developed in response to diocesan visitations. Staff will be added to the Sherrill Resource Center at the church center in New York and a new office of interpretation and public relations created, she said. "We have more stories than we can manage to tell and we need to place them," she said. "We need to be more pro-active in telling our story." Bishop Sam Hulse of Northwest Texas agreed with the initiative. "If those stories aren't told, we will get weaker and weaker," he said.

The program committee introduced a resolution on "Common Beliefs on Relationships and Appropriate Sexual Behavior." After council discussion and several drafts, the resolution was passed unanimously as a council statement and shaped into a resolution for action by General Convention. The resolution was introduced by Ralph Spence, Jr., of Montana who argued that a strong statement could be "helpful and unifying."

While acknowledging that the church's discussion on sexuality has revealed "increased ambiguity and tension," the statement said that it was "the church's responsibility to offer the values and guidance that enable individuals to avoid or heal relationships which are exploitative and hurtful and to seek and create relationships which are life-giving and grace filled."

### **Structure recommendations discussed**

Betty Gilmore of Texas, who chairs the Structure Commission, summarized the recommendations the commission will introduce to General Convention. The mandate of the commission had been enlarged since the 1994 General Convention asked for a review of the effectiveness of the church's organizational structure. She praised the 12 "diverse but committed, focused individuals" on the commission and said that it was "nothing less than a miracle" that they were able to agree on the full report. "There were no winners or losers in our consensus report," she said.

Members discussed the recommendations in small groups, and responded to the committee with comments, especially on the proposals for more accountability in the role of Executive Council and the creation of a new staff position for an executive director to serve both the presiding bishop and the council.

### **A case study in healing**

Council members joined diocesan leaders at Church of the Advent in Cincinnati, a parish still recovering from a painful split when the former rector and half of its members left in the spring of 1994 to begin a new non-denominational church.

After Evensong, dinner and a humorous if slightly irreverent race through the history of the diocese by the drama group, "Friends of the Groom," the council gathered for reports by lay leaders of Advent who held the parish together.



According to Dr. John Saccarelli, one of the reasons cited for the departure of the former rector was that the Episcopal Church had become "idolatrous" and had failed to discipline those who were deviating from Scripture and church doctrine.

Stockton Wulsin, the only vestry member who stayed, described his "lonely decision" and how deeply his family was affected. In a marked departure from the bitter animosity that accompanies most other separations by unhappy congregations, Bishop Thompson presided over a special service of "divorce" and invited other parishes in the diocese to send "ambassadors" to Advent on the first Sunday after the split. "Something new was born, a new sense of hope," said Wulsin in describing the slow healing process. "It's amazing what God has done," said the Rev. Angelo Puopolo, Jr., who stepped in to serve as priest-in-charge and is now the rector. "We were cracked--but the light of God shines through the cracks."

### **A time of transition**

During the final plenary, Suzanne Lawson, an observer from the Anglican Church of Canada, said that she sensed a "prevailing concern about transition" in the time leading up to General Convention, and a certain "ambivalence" during the meeting. "It seems that engagement in the issues is becoming more difficult," she said. And listening to the pain at Advent Church only "pointed to the harsh realities of transition," she added.

Lawson observed that most members seemed to realize that the complexion of the council will change as new people are elected at General Convention. But the vital question, she contended, is "How does the Episcopal Church exert its leadership in this obvious time of transition?"

### **In other action the council:**

- heard a progress report from Bishop Cal Scofield of Southeast Florida, co-chair of the Joint Nominating Committee for a new presiding bishop;
- passed a resolution objecting to advertising of alcohol on television;
- passed a resolution introduced by John McCann of Lexington calling for a mediation effort on issues of sexual misconduct;
- expressed support for the up-coming Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation National Summit;
- shared excitement over the new possibilities for mission if both the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America pass the Concordat of Agreement on full communion.

**--James Solheim is director of news and information for the Episcopal Church.**



97-1687

## **Episcopal Life sets records in circulation and income**

**by James Solheim**

(ENS) "The bottom line is this--*Episcopal Life* is healthy and poised to serve the church in its future," Harry Denman of Kansas told members of the Executive Council at its January meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio.

As chair of *Episcopal Life's* board of governors, Denman traced the progress of the church's national newspaper since its first issue in April of 1990. In seven years, "there have been many changes in our publication which have marked its growth and development," he said.

Denman called the newspaper "the main communications link of any kind in our church," and said that he still harbors dreams that it could go into every home in the Episcopal Church, citing a 1995 resolution from the presiding bishop's Council of Advice asking diocesan bishops to adopt that goal.

The board of governors actually investigated that possibility in 1993 when it asked consultants to determine the costs and the effect on advertising revenues. "They concluded that we could never get access to the names and addresses of more than 75 percent of Episcopalians," Denman told the council. "They also estimated that it would cost the church \$2.2 million to provide the publication free to these members." The board was also warned, Denman said, that "such a step would likely jeopardize our advertising base" by eliminating many of the smaller advertisers.

### **Number of 'wrap-arounds' increases**

Following the appointment of a marketing director in 1994, the number of diocesan partners who wrap their own newspapers around *Episcopal Life* has grown steadily. Denman said that with the addition of three more dioceses this spring, the partnership will include 21 dioceses, pushing circulation to nearly 220,000. It now stands at 201,300, an all-time high.

"We have made every possible effort to keep our costs down, and our subscription rates at a reasonable price that most anyone can afford," said Jerrold Hames, editor. "Nearly one-quarter of the church's domestic dioceses are now printing and mailing *Episcopal Life* with their diocesan publications and sharing our goal to get *Episcopal Life* into every home."

In 1995, total income--advertising and subscriptions--passed the \$1 million mark for the first time. Advertising revenues for 1997 are projected for about \$425,000, another record. Hames said that the national church has recognized the newspaper as a priority by committing financial resources to its development. As income has risen, the subsidy provided by the church has decreased.

Individual annual subscriptions to *Episcopal Life* are \$7; parish plans are \$4.50 and diocesan plans are \$3 per year. Information is available from Victoria Baker, marketing director, at 1-800-334-7626 (ext. 5391) or [victoria.baker@ecunet.org](mailto:victoria.baker@ecunet.org).

**--James Solheim is director of news and information for the Episcopal Church.**

97-1688

## **Episcopal Church struggles to aid blizzard-stricken Indians in the Dakotas**

**by Jack Donovan**

(ENS) The dioceses of North and South Dakota are struggling to provide food and warmth for Indians suffering through the harshest winter in memory on the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota.

"This winter the snow started in October and never left," said the Rev. John Floberg, vicar of St. Luke's, Fort Yates and St. James', Cannonball, the two Episcopal churches serving the North Dakota side of the reservation. "We've had nine snowstorms or blizzards."

Snow accumulations up to five times normal levels has conspired with a tripling of the price of propane and the cutting of federal funds for weatherizing and homebuilding to create a federal disaster area on the reservation. "The need for fuel has eaten into all other resources," Floberg said. "Food has been taken off the table to pay for it."

At the food pantries administered by Floberg's two churches, over 4,500 lbs. of food was distributed in January to 150 families. "We were open one hour in Fort Yates and an hour and a half in Cannonball," he said. "We stopped giving out only because that was all we could afford. There was more need, but we didn't have more resources." Nonetheless, the pantries supplied a week's worth of food to 800 individuals, enough to last until food stamps were issued in February.

### **PB's Fund issues grants**

The Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief issued two grants in early February, \$25,000 to South Dakota and \$20,000 to North Dakota.

Bishop Creighton Robertson of South Dakota will be meeting with diocesan officers on February 13 to determine the best use of the grant. Diocesan administrator Randy Barnhardt said that there was a good chance the money would be used for fuel assistance. The Indians on the reservation "don't have any fuel out there," he said. "My own heating bill is 50% higher than it's ever been, so I can't imagine what it's like on the reservation--there's nothing out there, no trees, it's just prairie."

Some of the North Dakota grant has gone to weatherize Floberg's food pantries and stocking them with 28,000 pounds of food in preparation for increased demand over a longer period of time. Floberg said that once the primary need of food is addressed, the church will try to assist with an array of weather-related problems such as frozen water lines, broken hot water heaters, and the provision of better or additional heat sources.

As the result of an interview with a radio station in nearby Fargo, Floberg said that he expects local people and the Red Cross to supply ample blankets and coats to the reservation. He noted that the Lutheran church had also donated quilts and blankets and that he was in conversation with the Methodist church regarding ways that they could assist him. "It's turning into a real ecumenical thing," he said.

He has also received help over the internet. "I sent out a prayer request online," said



Floberg, whose QUEST address is JOHN FLOBERG. "Good old internet. Within two days we had calls saying, 'We've got resources. How can we help?'"

--Jack Donovan is communications assistant for the Episcopal Church's office of news and information.

97-1689

## **Presiding Bishop signs call by religious leaders for campaign finance reform**

**by James H. Thrall**

(ENS) Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning joined other religious leaders in signing a letter to Congressional members calling for campaign finance reform.

The present system of financing elections is "a major scandal," the letter states, with current laws permitting "the unfair influence of persons and groups with extraordinary wealth and allowing them access unavailable to the ordinary citizens."

The letter's signers' wrote that "as religious leaders, we believe in government's role in seeking justice for all people and in building the common good. Justice cannot be achieved unless the rules governing a democratic process are just and fair to all."

Members of Congress face an "inescapable duty," the letter asserts, to "protect the process of democracy," in which "a citizen's free vote defies the powers of money, social class and unequal access to the public media." While admitting that they are "aware of how difficult it will be to make substantial changes," the signers warned that "without substantial reform, we see further erosion in the public trust."

### **A temptation to sell votes**

Reform is a moral issue, the signers argue, since the "temptation to use money to buy unjust favors is an ancient one." The prophet Amos assailed merchants in Israel who "sell the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes," the letter notes.

The current approach to financing campaigns "gives at least the appearance that the President, Senators and Representatives are willing to sell their values and votes, as well as the integrity of their offices, for the sake of campaign contributions," the letter maintains. "Certainly, most big benefactors must expect to become very sizable beneficiaries of the government."

Representatives of the religious community, including the Episcopal Church, were scheduled to participate in a press conference in Washington D.C., February 13, with Senators John McCain of Arizona, an Episcopalian, and Russ Feingold of Wisconsin, who are sponsoring campaign finance reform legislation. Expected to attend were representatives of: National Council of Churches, National Association of Evangelicals, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Orthodox Church in America, NETWORK: A National Catholic

Social Justice Lobby, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Church of the Brethren, Presbyterian Church, USA, Progressive National Baptist Convention, United Church of Christ, American Friends Service Committee, Unitarian Universalist Association, American Ethical Union, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and Church Women United.

--James H. Thrall is deputy director of news and information for the Episcopal Church.

97-1690

## **Virginia Seminary revises policy on sexual behavior**

by James H. Thrall

(ENS) In Virginia Theological Seminary's 1997-1998 student catalogue, a more general policy on expected norms of moral behavior will replace an earlier statement that explicitly forbade "sexual intercourse outside the bonds of marriage, adulterous relationships, and the practice of homosexuality."

By a vote of 31 to 3, January 22, the seminary's board of trustees adopted "A Call to a Holy Life," as "more in keeping with Anglican comprehensiveness than the previous statement and more in keeping with the biblical balance of the Christian tradition," wrote Bishop Peter James Lee of Virginia, the board's chair, and seminary Dean and President Martha J. Horne in a joint letter to alumni and seminary supporters.

The new statement notes that the seminary, located in Richmond, Virginia, "respects the policies regarding sexual behavior maintained by bishops and other ministers with authority over individual seminary faculty and students," and calls on members of the seminary community to be "wholesome examples of persons called to a holy life."

The statement goes on, however, to list expected characteristics of behavior such as "sexual discipline and responsibility," rather than particular sexual prohibitions.

Members of the community, including trustees, faculty and students, it states, "are expected to exhibit such characteristics as personal and academic integrity, truthfulness, responsibility in the stewardship of their health and financial resources, fidelity in their commitments, concern for justice in all of God's creation, respect for the dignity of others, sexual discipline and responsibility."

### **Taking a broad approach**

In their letter, Lee and Horne explained that the previous policy "led to an excessive emphasis on matters of sexuality while the new statement provides a more demanding expectation of all faculty, trustees and students."

Under the new policy, Lee and Horne stated, "sexual issues need not bar one from admission." Admission criteria will be broadened, they said, "so that applicants will be considered according to whether the total balance of their lives gives promise for effective service in the church."



In extreme cases of sexual misconduct, "disciplinary and even legal measures may be warranted," the statement notes, "to ensure justice and safety to all members of the community." At the same time, it states, obedience to the call to a holy life "is not an achievement but a gift of God's grace that comes to those whose lives are grounded in Holy Scripture, enriched and disciplined in the community faith, and focused on Christ as the companion and end of life's pilgrimage."

A separate policy statement on sexual misconduct will remain in effect. It lists as inappropriate such behavior as "persistent, unwanted sexual attention," and requests for "sexual favors in return for employment or educational decisions."

### **Changing views on sexuality**

The seminary's policy was first drafted in 1971 and revised in 1977 and 1981 to reflect society's changing views of homosexuality and new national church statements on sexuality. The original version viewed homosexuality as a psychological disorder and barred "practicing homosexuals" from admission, while the 1977 version also excluded "professing" homosexuals who publicly advocated homosexuality. The policy drafted in 1981 carefully distinguished between prohibited "sexual behavior" and "sexual orientation," and allowed for "arguing a particular moral viewpoint in the context of teaching and learning."

The latest revision culminates an extended period of study that included a daylong dialogue for board members, faculty, students and alumni and alumnae held last fall. Adding that the seminary's board and faculty are not "of one mind" on appropriate norms for sexual behavior, Lee and Horne suggested that "our more comprehensive and balanced policy will strengthen the continuing discussion of these issues in the seminary community."

Virginia is not alone among Episcopal seminaries in wrestling with the issue of official policy on sexuality. In 1994, the General Theological Seminary in New York revised its housing regulations to permit same-sex couples to live in seminary housing after a faculty member filed a civil rights complaint charging discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

--James H. Thrall is deputy director of news and information for the Episcopal Church.

97-1691

## **General Seminary dean leaving to head New Hampshire school**

by James H. Thrall

(ENS) Bishop Craig B. Anderson, dean and president of The General Theological Seminary in New York City, announced February 6 that he will be resigning his position to serve as rector of St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire.

Anderson, who had been named as a possible candidate for either presiding bishop or bishop of the Diocese of New York, said that the move permits him to pursue his vocation as

an educator while working directly to develop a new generation of leaders.

"We need to be identifying, raising up and recruiting young Episcopalians as leaders in the church and in society who have a concern for the common good," he said. "The people who come to St. Paul's are going to be those leaders."

The decision to leave General, where he has served for more than four years, comes at the end of "a long and prayerful period" of vocational discernment, he said. "Education has been a hallmark of my ministry in the church, and St. Paul's represents an enduring commitment I have had." In making the move, he said, "I feel that I am putting my money where my mouth is, walking the walk."

### **A promising future for General**

Anderson added that "the sadness I feel in leaving GTS is tempered by the knowledge that I leave a strong institution with a clear vision, a talented faculty and restructured administration, an improved financial condition, and a carefully charted plan for the future."

He said that he would have liked to have stayed at the seminary for another year or two, especially to see the school's new strategic plan launched, but "sometimes the timing isn't exactly perfect."

St. Paul's School, often called the flagship of Episcopal boarding schools, was founded in 1856 and now has a coeducational enrollment of more than 500 students from 48 states and 18 foreign countries, all of whom live at the school. Situated on a 2,000 acres in New Hampshire, St. Paul's has a faculty of 100 compared to General's 15.

Anderson's position as rector will be comparable to that of headmaster at other schools. In announcing his decision to the seminary faculty, Anderson mentioned St. Paul's strong Episcopal affiliation as particularly influencing his decision.

### **Praise for Anderson's tenure**

"GTS has been well served by its eleventh dean," said Bishop Mellick Belshaw, chairman of the seminary's board of trustees. "His accomplishments will benefit GTS for many years to come."

Belshaw noted that General's present enrollment is the largest in the nine years. The school's educational programs have grown to include a course of study for a doctor of theology degree in Anglican Studies, a College for Bishops that trains new bishops, and a Church Development Institute operated in partnership with the School of Theology at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee.

"Particularly important has been the dean's invaluable leadership in the area of strategic planning," Belshaw said. "With the plan complete and needing only board approval, General is poised to begin an exciting new era. This is a truly lasting legacy."

Anderson said that he plans to continue his involvement in national church positions, in what he called "public theology," including serving as president-elect of the National Council of Churches.

--James H. Thrall is deputy director of news and information for the Episcopal Church. This article is based on a news release by Bruce Parker of The General Theological Seminary.





## *news briefs*

97-1692

### **PepsiCo decision on Burma sales hailed as victory for democracy**

(ENI) After years of campaigning by church groups and activists opposed to the military government of Burma--also known as Myanmar--the PepsiCo soft drink company has announced that it is stopping all its sales there. Last year PepsiCo sold its 40 percent interest in the company that held the franchise in Burma, and has now announced that the local bottler will no longer be authorized to sell Pepsi Cola. "Based on our assessment of the spirit of current U.S. government foreign policy, we are completing our total disengagement from the Burmese market," an official statement from PepsiCo said. "Accordingly we have severed all relationships with our former franchise bottler, effective January 15, 1997. The bottler in Burma is taking appropriate steps to ensure that all production and distribution of our products are ceased by May 31, 1997." Religious organizations, such as the Maryknoll missionary society, have used their influence as stockholders to persuade PepsiCo and other companies to cease doing business in Burma. Essentially all business conducted in Burma is considered to be supporting the military regime, which has been accused of widespread violation of human rights. The State of Massachusetts, some city governments and student groups at universities such as Harvard also have joined in boycotts of company products to put pressure on the military government. According to Brian Grieves, Episcopal staff officer for peace and justice, PepsiCo is not included in the stock portfolio of the Episcopal Church. The church has focused its efforts instead, he said, on oil companies such as Texaco and Atlantic-Richfield (ARCO) because those are "crucial to Burma's plans for economic growth."

### **Lutherans release membership figures**

(ELCA) Figures recently released by the Lutheran World Federation show that there were 60,978,623 Lutherans worldwide in 1996. The comparable figures for 1995 and 1994 were 60.1 million and 59.7 million respectively. The 7.6 million member Church of Sweden remained the world's largest Lutheran church, followed by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) with nearly 5.2 million members and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland with just under 4.6 million. Germany, where the Lutheran tradition has its origin, had the largest number of Lutherans in any one country. Its Lutheran churches have a combined membership of close to 14.2 million, ahead of the United States with nearly 8.3 million. The most significant increases in membership were reported by the two largest Lutheran churches in Africa. The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus recorded an increase of over 400,000 members, while the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania grew

by 100,000. The Episcopal Church and the ELCA will vote this summer on whether to enter a Concordat of Agreement bringing the two churches into full communion.

### **Episcopal ads included in British design collection**

(ENS) British Design and Art Direction, a non-profit group of advertising professionals that issues books celebrating creativity in the applied arts, included advertisements from two Episcopal Church campaigns in a book on art direction published in February, 1997. The advertisements, four from the Church Ad project and one from the Episcopal Church's Native American ministries, were the work of Nancy Rice, creative director at the Chicago advertising firm DDB Needham Chicago. Rice was one of 28 art directors selected from an international group to be included in *The Art Direction Book*, which seeks to illustrate a "standard of excellence demonstrated by the master craftsmen featured in its pages." The Church Ad project is an independent effort based in Minnesota to supply high-quality advertising to local churches. The poster sponsored by the Native American ministries office was made to promote the 1992 celebration of 500 years of survival by Native Americans since the arrival of Christopher Columbus.

### **NCC delegation to North Korea reports food shortages**

(ENS) A recent National Council of Churches (NCC) delegation to North Korea came face to face with that nation's "grim" food shortage situation and appealed for a "massive response" from the world community to avert starvation. "I am convinced after being there that the crisis is for real," said the delegation's leader NCC president Melvin Talbert, a United Methodist Bishop. "The North Korean government is laying aside its pride and appealing to the world community to save its people." To help meet food and other basic needs, Church World Service (CWS), the NCC's humanitarian response arm, collected \$410,932 in 1995-96 for aid for North Korea, which was used to purchase rice, beef, antibiotics, blankets and rehydration tablets. CWS recently issued a new \$500,000 appeal for North Korea.

### **Ratzinger attacks relativism as threat to faith**

(Tablet) A recently published address by Catholic Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger expressed his pessimism about modern theology and attacked liberation theology, relativism, inter-religious "dialogue," New Age practices and modern exegesis. Ratzinger argued that relativism in theology diminishes the stature of Christ. "Jesus is consciously relativised as one religious leader among others," he said. In relativism, "to dialogue means to put one's own position, i.e. one's faith, on the same level as the convictions of others." He said he found "a strange closeness between Europe's post-metaphysical philosophy and Asia's negative theology." He noted that the "a-religious and pragmatic relativism of Europe and America can get a kind of religious consecration from India which seems to give its renunciation of dogma the dignity of a greater respect before the mystery of God and of man." Anyone who resists relativism is thought to be persisting "obstinately in giving priority to one's Western culture." Ratzinger said that classical theology has been defenseless in the face of these developments because it lost credibility when it was misled by the philosophical assumptions of historical-critical exegesis. This method fixes biblical



personalities in their past, he said, instead of bringing the Bible "to today, to my current life."

### **NCC welcomes additional funds to rebuild burned churches**

(ENS) The Congress of National Black Churches (CNBC)--among the National Council of Churches' (NCC) partners in the National Rebuilding Initiative Task Force--recently announced that it had received \$6 million from the Eli Lilly Foundation for the CNBC's new program to rebuild churches and prevent further arsons. "This is good news for the congregations whose churches have been burned," said NCC general secretary Joan Brown Campbell. "We are grateful that additional funds for rebuilding have been made available." By the end of spring, 1997, the NCC predicts that nearly all of the approximately \$7 million in cash raised for the Burned Churches Fund, along with additional in-kind assistance, will have been allocated. "But we know of at least 30 other burned churches where hatred is suspected as a motive. Thanks to the Lilly grant these churches now have somewhere to turn for help," Campbell said. The Burned Churches Fund also received a \$25,000 grant from the Beneficial Management Corporation of America (BMCA), a financial services company. The grant was the result of the efforts of BMCA employees, who donated both their time and resources to collect donations for the fund.

### **Hundreds of students to help rebuild burned churches**

(ENS) Nearly 500 college students will be joining a National Council of Churches (NCC) sponsored program to help rebuild four Southeast churches destroyed by acts of hatred. The NCC Church Rebuilding Project is working with *Christmas in April*■USA to organize "Spring Rebuild!" The program will bring more than 25 groups of high school and college students to work camps at four sites (two in Florida, one in Virginia and one in Tennessee) for a week at a time. "This is an opportunity to help for people who have been touched by the pain of those who lost their churches to arson," said Sarajane Johnson, director of work camps for *Christmas in April*■USA. Johnson said the work camps also provide an opportunity to build community, both among the work campers and with the congregations. "We hope this program will help congregations heal," she said.

### **Diaconate formation directors meet in New Orleans**

(ENS) Diocesan directors of diaconate formation in the Episcopal Church gathered for their first conference recently. In a vision statement developed as a guide for the formation of deacons, the directors said, "A deacon is a baptized person called and empowered by God and the Christian community to be an icon illuminating Christ as a code of servanthood for all people. The role of the deacon in liturgy mirrors the role of the deacon in church and world." Among other activities, the directors discussed the possible certification of formation programs and instructors. A committee will meet in May to draft guidelines for the diaconate in the Episcopal Church. The conference was sponsored by the North American Association for the Diaconate and was chaired by Deacon Susanne Watson of the Diocese of Iowa.

## **Government commission turns down Garden of Eden**

(ENI) A plan to re-create the Garden of Eden in the English countryside received a setback recently with the news that its application for funding from the British Government's Millennium Commission had been rejected. The project coordinators were seeking 28 million pounds sterling, about half the overall cost of the project, and, according to *The Church Times* in London, had the support of the Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey for its funding application. Despite the setback, the project will go ahead. The garden, which will be part of a Christian conference and ministry center, should be open to the public in the year 2001. It will have many kinds of fruit trees, including apple trees.

## **Zairian archbishop's life threatened**

(ACNS) Archbishop of Zaire Patrice Njojo was nearly killed during recent fighting in northeastern Zaire. Njojo is now safely at home in Boga but while he was staying at Kyabwohe near the Ugandan border three bandits forced themselves into the house where he was staying. "They forced me to lie flat on the ground together with the house owner," Njojo wrote in a letter to the Church Mission Society in London. "They fired their guns into the ground about 50 centimeters from me. They did the same to the house owner, they wanted to kill him. He got under my bed together with the children who were with me." Njojo said that following a fierce argument about taking the house owner out, the bandits asked for money. "By good fortune I did have about 65,000 Ugandan shillings," he said, continuing his narrative. "Having given them this they said it was very little. They told me to produce dollars and I had \$145 which they took, then I was forced to turn out all my belongings in my case but they found no more money. Finally they told me to go into the house and I knew my end had come. But the Lord did his own miracles again, because when they fired into the house they shot out the lamp and this enabled me to hide in one corner of the house and the bullets passed right through. As they were outside they thought I was dead, as did the wife of the house owner. She was the first to enter the house and see what had happened to me. The three bandits ran away, each of them had a gun. I thank God for his protection and especially for bringing us through 1996 into a new year."

## **Welsh churches plan ecumenical bishop**

(ENI) Five Welsh churches are considering a plan to appoint what supporters believe would be the world's first ecumenical bishop, who would belong equally and fully to each of the denominations. The aim is to have the bishop in post by January 1, 2000. Gethin Abraham-Williams, general secretary of the Covenanted Churches in Wales, an ecumenical group, said, "There are uniting churches that have bishops, but we know of no other case of a bishop who would represent churches that are staying separate." He stressed however, that the proposal was part of a "brick-on-brick" approach to eventual full visible unity. The notion of a bishop within their structure would mean a big change for some of the churches which will consider the plan. One of the churches involved, the Church in Wales, has an episcopal tradition as part of the Anglican Communion, but the other four churches are non-episcopal: the Presbyterian Church of Wales, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and the Covenanted Baptist Churches. The churches have 18 months to make their responses.



## **Campaign group may import bishops**

(ACNS) *Reform*, an Anglican conservative evangelical group, recently indicated its intention to set up an international network of bishops who would be available to provide episcopal oversight to the group's members and bypass the oversight of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. *Reform* is opposed to the ordination of women and of practicing homosexuals. It has already requested that the archbishops provide a 'flying bishop' who shares their viewpoint, but this request was turned down. The chairman of the group, the Rev. Philip Hacking, has said that he could find three bishops required for a valid but irregular consecration and these might come from overseas. The group does not plan immediate action but at a meeting in December they drew up strategies which they have now shared publicly. A statement from the group said that three strategies were being planned: "The employment, where necessary, desirable and possible of retired or other godly bishops in good standing with the Church," the use of the existing 'flying bishops', or a future evangelical one, as requested; and "the election and consecration, after due process, of bishops from the *Reform* constituency who can be employed where necessary and desirable." *Reform* says its membership is 600 clergy and 1,300 lay members.

## **English 'flying bishop' visits Scotland**

(CT) A 'flying bishop' from the Church of England who was banned recently from preaching or celebrating the eucharist in two Scottish dioceses was later permitted to preach in one diocese. 'Flying bishops' have been used in the Church of England to serve parishes opposed to the ordination of women. Bishop Edwin Barnes of Richborough fulfilled a longstanding engagement at St. Salvador's in the Diocese of Brechin, where he had been invited to join in a Candlemas celebration in thanksgiving of the restoration of the church. Bishop Richard Holloway, who, while acting as the Bishop of Brechin, had originally banned Barnes' visit, said that the matter had been resolved in an "amicable compromise." Barnes was prevented from entering the other diocese however. Bishop John Taylor of Glasgow and Galloway decided to uphold the ban on Barnes, saying that he believed a pressure group was "trying to use" Bishop Barnes to get 'flying bishops' introduced in Scotland, which was not feasible.

## **Clergy receive lesson in self-defense**

(CT) Security cameras on vicarages and knee-strikes against attackers were recommended to clergy in Petersborough, England, at a recent self-defense course sponsored by area police. The course was run by Inspector Peter Boatman, a self-defense expert, who said that "members of the clergy often come into contact with people who could want to harm them in some way, and this course will raise their level of awareness and give them the skills to deal with a potential problem." Lydia McClean, curate of St. Paul's, Brackley, said that during the course, "there was a massive guy dressed in body armor who illustrated what to do if someone invades your personal space. If someone comes too close, you should lunge forward and shout 'Stop.' If he grabbed someone else's arm and you were a bystander, you could grab the attacker's arms and kick him back. I'm not Mrs. Brawn of Britain, but when I tried it, he fell over."

## **Church of England attendance figures fall again**

(CT) Official figures released recently show that the average total Sunday attendance for the Church of England was 1,045,000 in 1995, the largest drop in 20 years. A loss of only 9,000 attendees in 1994 encouraged church commentators to talk of the church's decline "bottoming out," but the new figure--a drop of 36,000 attendees--brings that claim into question. The figures from the latest edition of *Church Statistics* show a decline across the board, from baptisms and confirmations to electoral-roll numbers. Bishop Nygel McCulloch of Wakefield said that it was time the church conducted a detailed survey of people's patterns of attendance. "We need to test the claim made by parish priests that, overall, there are as many people coming to church as before--it's just that they come less frequently," he said.

## **Retired presiding bishop assesses ailing church**

(ENS) Retired Presiding Bishop John Allin described the Episcopal Church as "systematically ill" in a recent wide-ranging speech to Anglican scholars. "I suggest to you that the Episcopal Church is systematically ill. We seem to believe in salvation by system," Allin said at a banquet co-sponsored by Scholarly Engagement with Anglican Doctrine (SEAD) and the Diocese of South Carolina's Advancement Society. "To spend 18 months replacing the chief servant of servants in a diocese is wrong. Elephants bring forth their young in a shorter time than that," Allin said to roars of laughter. Allin also questioned whether the Episcopal Church's next presiding bishop, to be elected at General Convention in July, should fill a "prophetic role," as suggested by some Episcopalians. "We do not need a prophet as the next presiding bishop. We need a pastor and an administrator," Allin said. "I tend not to trust people standing around waiting to be prophets. God decides who prophets are. They are not elected or selected."--Doug Leblanc, *United Voice*

## **Clinton's task force finds fall in attacks on churches**

(ENI) A recent government report on investigations into arson attacks on churches in the United States, with special attention to white attacks on black churches in the southern states, has indicated that the number of reported incidents declined sharply over the past six months. The National Church Arson Task Force, set up by President Bill Clinton to coordinate government response to the attacks, said reports of arson (including bombings) in December were down to five black churches and six others. That was a decline from the peak of 19 black church arsons and 30 others in June of 1996, when Clinton drew attention to the issue in his weekly radio address to the nation and set up the task force. President Clinton's radio address followed a campaign by the National Council of Churches (NCC) and other organizations about a series of apparently racist attacks against churches with mainly black congregations. In another radio address, Clinton mentioned the NCC as one of the groups that had "come together as one to tackle this problem." Reporting on the period from January 1, 1995 to January 7, 1997, the task force said 328 incidents had been investigated, including at least 138 at black churches and, of these, three-quarters in the south. In the same period, arrests totalled 143, including 116 whites, 24 blacks and one Hispanic person. Forty-eight individuals involved in 43 incidents have been convicted, but a racial breakdown for those convicted was not given because some of them were juveniles. Of those arrested,



more than 40 percent were aged 17 or younger.

### **Ethiopian leader welcomes church support for democratic society**

(ENI) Ethiopian president Negaso Gidada recently declared that churches have an "essential" role to play in the "rebuilding of a free and democratic" society in Ethiopia. Gidada made his statement while meeting with Dr. Konrad Raiser, general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Gidada noted however that "in situations of poverty and social upheaval, the threat of religious extremism is ever-present. We need the constructive contributions of the churches as we pursue the goals of political stability and social development." The president welcomed the WCC's efforts to promote Christian unity and Raiser's "timely" visit to Ethiopia. Raiser made pastoral visits to the two WCC member churches in Ethiopia--the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the (Lutheran) Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. "Christian churches and the Jewish and Muslim communities of Ethiopia suffered greatly during the past 17 years of authoritarian rule in our country," Gidada said. "The new Ethiopian Constitution seeks to redress the situation by guaranteeing citizens the right to practice religion in private or in public, to adopt the religion of their choice, and to establish religious institutions."

### **Anglican liturgy conference set for Finland**

(ACNS) The steering committee for the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation (IALC) met recently to plan for the August, 1997, conference on the theology of ordination and ordination rites. The conference will take place in Finland, near the site of the biennial congress of Societas Liturgica, the ecumenical liturgical academy. Ronald Dowling, IALC convener, told the steering committee that he had already invited Anglican members of Societas Liturgica to attend the conference. The IALC organizes conferences at the mid-point between full consultations, which are held every four years. The steering committee identified a number of issues for consideration, including the Reformation background of Anglican ordination practice, the nature and definition of the episcopate, presbyterate and diaconate, the place of "local ordained ministry" and commissioned lay workers and catechists in the overall ministry of the church, the question of ordination directly to the presbyterate and the episcopate, the content and style of ordination rites and the theology implied, the role of the ministry in relation to the church as model of the kingdom, and the servant role of the ministry.

### **Bishop says all Irish churches should apologize**

(CT) The churches in Ireland should agree to a common admission of guilt for their part in the wrongs of centuries, said former Bishop Samuel Poyntz of the Anglican Diocese of Connor, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. "There is much in our past histories of which we should be ashamed," Poyntz said. "To name one thing among many on the Church of Ireland's side; we never raised a voice against the penal laws that had such a savage effect on Roman Catholics and Presbyterians. On the Roman Catholic side, mention might be made of the rigorous imposition of the 1908 Ne Temere decree (requiring Protestants in inter-Church marriages to rear their children as Roman Catholics) until recent legislation. Scratch the surface and we all have hurts." He said many prominent church

people, including the Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, the Church of Ireland Primate Robin Eames, and the former Roman Catholic Primate of Ireland, Cahal Daly, had asked pardon for past wrongs. "This is commendable; but is another step required? The Irish inter-church meeting committee might consider drafting a confession, to be accepted by all the mainline churches on this island."

### **Bishops' secretaries to meet in Albany for tenth anniversary**

(ENS) The tenth anniversary meeting of Bishops Executive Secretaries Together (BEST) will be held May 1-4 at the Desmond Hotel in Albany, N.Y. The conference's opening banquet will be hosted by Marlene Elacqua, secretary to Bishop David Ball in the Diocese of Albany, whose idea originated the first BEST conference. Elacqua first proposed a meeting of bishops' secretaries to Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning. With seed money provided by Browning, the first meeting was held a decade ago in the Diocese of California. Throughout the years the association has grown. Last year, about 100 secretaries attended the conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Suffragan Bishop Catharine Roskam will be this year's keynote speaker.

### **Eames Commission monitoring group meets**

(ACNS) The monitoring group of the Eames Commission (the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Communion and Women in the Episcopate) met in London recently to consider the responses from the provinces of the communion to the work of the commission and to assess the process of reception on women's ordination and consecration around the communion. Last March every province of the communion was sent a questionnaire by the commission which asked provinces to: update the commission on the situation of women's ordination and consecration in their province; report on the process of reception and relationships within the province, between provinces and ecumenically on this question; report on the status of the debate of women's ordination and consecration in the province; state if the pastoral principles outlined in the Eames Commission had influenced the province's life and witness and finally to assess how these pastoral principles have assisted the unity and diversity of the Communion. Two-thirds of the provinces of the communion have responded to the questionnaire. The monitoring group will now prepare a report of these responses for the 1998 Lambeth Conference.

### **Diocese of Washington postpones pro-gay/anti-gay resolutions**

(ENS) At its recent convention, the Diocese of Washington voted to postpone discussion of the pro- and anti-gay resolutions before it and instead continue work with a pilot dialogue. A spokesman for the Continuing the Dialogue Committee, which included representatives of both Integrity/Washington (a pro-gay group) and Save Our Church (an anti-gay group), reported that the committee had developed a dialogue format similar to that used by Common Ground on the abortion issue. He said that a pilot test of the dialogue held in November 1996 was successful and would be reproduced throughout the diocese during the next year. Carolyn Feinglass, co-convenor of Integrity/Washington and a member of the committee, said that the "dialogue process is the best chance to save the church from division. Integrity supports it completely." Five resolutions related to homosexuality (4 anti-



gay, 1 pro-gay) were due to be considered by convention. However, as a result of the pilot dialogue, two sponsors agreed to withdraw their resolutions and jointly sponsor a substitute resolution that affirmed the diocesan dialogue process. Both sponsors made it clear that they were not retreating from their positions on homosexuality, but that they believed that dialogue was essential for resolving this conflict. The Committee on Resolutions recommended that the other three anti-gay resolutions be postponed indefinitely, noting that this topic had been exhaustively discussed at previous conventions, and the motion passed overwhelmingly.

## **People**

**The Rev. C. Wallis Ohl, Jr.**, rector of St. Michael the Archangel, Colorado Springs, Colorado, was elected Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of Northwest Texas on the seventh ballot. The consecration is scheduled for June 28.

**James M. Rosenthal**, director of communications for the Anglican Communion world-wide, has been installed as honorary canon of the Cathedral of the Redeemer in Madrid, Spain. Madrid is the See City for the Church of Spain, the Spanish Episcopal Church. The Anglican Bishop of Spain called Rosenthal's appointment one that reflects the desire of the Church in Spain to "increase its profile in work among the churches of the Anglican Communion." Rosenthal is also lay canon of the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Gibraltar and the Cathedral of All Saints in Mpwapa, Tanzania.

**Dr. Jim Thomas** has been appointed chairperson of the North American Regional Committee (NARC) of St. George's College, a continuing education center for the Anglican Communion located in Jerusalem. Thomas, a member of Grace Episcopal Church in Ponca City, Oklahoma, is a clinical psychologist and a seminary student at Phillips Theological Seminary.

**Bishop Doug Theuner** of New Hampshire has been elected to the board of directors of Lutheran Social Services of New England (LSSNE). He will be the first non-Lutheran to serve on the board in the agency's history. "This offers an opportunity for both church bodies," stated Bob Kay, vice-president of LSSNE. "For Episcopalians in New Hampshire, it opens the door to well-established ministries and resources. For Lutherans, it means the strengthening and expansion of our programs. But the most important impact of this partnership will be felt by those we serve. Simply put, we will have more help to offer to the people who need it."

**Correction:** In the category of "When is a bishop actually a bishop?", an article about the election of the Rev. Catherine M. Waynick as bishop coadjutor for the Diocese of Indianapolis in the People section of the January 23 ENS packet included one inaccuracy. Waynick is the seventh woman elected to be a bishop in the Episcopal Church. She will probably become the church's seventh female bishop when she is consecrated, presumably in

June, not when she succeeds Bishop Edward Jones at his retirement in September as the article stated. With Jones's retirement, Waynick will probably become the church's fourth female diocesan bishop. We use "probably" because, conceivably, another woman could be elected and consecrated a bishop before Waynick, or take office as a diocesan before she does. We'll keep you posted.





## *news features*

97-1693

### **Liberian priest's family reunited with help of local and national church**

by James H. Thrall

(ENS) When the Rev. Dee Bright, an Episcopal priest in Liberia, and his wife, Monyue, parted in April of last year, Bright was about to board an American helicopter with their son, Dee Jr., to flee the re-eruption of violence in their war-torn country.

Monyue and their daughter, Vonti, had to remain behind, hoping to make their way by car to the Ivory Coast.

The decision to part was logical and driven by harsh necessity. Because he was born in the United States, Dee Jr., now eight years old, could be evacuated as a United States citizen, and could take one parent with him. With rampaging gangs of rebel soldiers targeting clergy and other religious leaders, Bright was in far greater danger than his wife.

Still, "it was a painful thing," Bright said months later from his new home in the rectory of St. Christopher's Church in Fort Worth, Texas. "I was looking right into the eyes of my wife and daughter, and (the U.S. officials) could not pick them up. They could just take me and my son."

#### **Threats in the night**

The family already had barely escaped death when two separate armed groups burst into their home in the middle of the night and threatened to shoot them all if they were not gone by daylight. The evacuation marked the third time that the family had fled from the chaos of Liberia. "Two or three times in 1990 and 1991, I was arrested and nearly killed," Bright said.

Monyue and Vonti, now six years old, did manage to travel past rebel roadblocks to Danané in Ivory Coast where they lived in a refugee community for nearly 10 months. Finally, late on the night of January 28, they stepped off an airplane at Dallas-Fort Worth Airport and into the arms of the two Dees.

"We don't seem to end in sharing our experiences--all they went through and all that we went through," Bright said. "We have been exploding with joy."

"What if we are both in a dream and we woke and were disappointed?" asked Monyue. "It's too good to be real."

There to share the moment of the arrival were members of St. Christopher's Church as well as St. Stephen's Church in Hurst where Bright taught a Bible study. "They all came

in a caravan," Bright said. "St. Stephen's brought a banner."

### **Help from local and national churches**

Drawn to Fort Worth by the presence of Monyue's relatives, Bright found a spiritual and literal home in the Diocese of Fort Worth with the congregation of St. Christopher's. Members of the congregation and their rector, the Rev. Irvin "Sherm" Gagnon, helped him develop a ministry as a supply priest for other parishes in the diocese, and worked both to raise funds for the family and to help Bright obtain the visa he needed to work.

But Bright's main goal since his arrival has been to reunite his family. After he contacted Richard Parkins, director of Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), the national immigration and refugee resettlement agency of the Episcopal Church, "EMM made the actual connection," Bright said. "They did the work."

Parkins was able to visit Monyue and Vonti in Danané last fall while on a fact-finding trip to West Africa with heads of other denominational refugee agencies. Working with his counterpart at Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, Parkins was able to persuade the U.S. State Department and the Immigration and Naturalization Service to interview Monyue and to move quickly on her case.

"It could have been another six months," Parkins said. "Visits by immigration officer to that area are rare. We were able to convince the officer to delay his departure so that Monyue and at least one other family that had been separated could be interviewed." The Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief also assisted with a \$4,000 grant through the Refugee Family Reunification Project of the Diocese of Fort Worth.

### **Hopes for the future**

The Brights plan to return to Liberia eventually, but first will work to "really advance ourselves in the area of our careers," Dee Bright said. Monyue is an educator, and "I plan to pursue my graduate degree in theology to better myself in terms of returning and serving my country with better impact," he said.

Their rented home in Monrovia, where he was principal of the largest Episcopal high school in the country, has been looted of all their possessions, and while the country is safer, church leaders still face danger.

The current lull in the Liberia's fighting is "only a cease fire," he said. "Every time it will end up in a deadlock and the fighting will start again." He added, "I am clergy, and that is one of the risks, but I'm not sure that I'm supposed to impose the risk of my work on my children."

Vonti's name means "child of war" in Bassa, a language spoken in Liberia, but it's time, he said, for her brother and her to experience a little peace.

**--James H. Thrall is deputy director of news and information for the Episcopal Church.**



97-1694

## **Address from the chair to the Executive Council Cincinnati, Ohio, January 28, 1997**

### **Alternative futures--visions of possibilities**

If you have children, or grandchildren, or have ever taught Sunday School, you have likely heard this question: "What is heaven like?" I have heard the question more than once, and asked it myself. After a certain age, the image of floating on clouds, harp in hand, just doesn't do it.

And then, of course, the other half of the question. "What is hell like?" We have some images--more literary than biblical. Personally, I have never internalized the ideas of the "weeping and gnashing of teeth," let alone the red-suited devil, the fire or the brimstone. I confess, I'm not sure what brimstone is.

In our Catechism is the question: "What do we mean by heaven and hell?" And the answer: "By heaven, we mean eternal life in our enjoyment of God; by hell, we mean eternal death in our rejection of God." Those answers come to the point. They answer the question in our heads, but, I wonder, do they speak to our hearts? I do know, there are things beyond human comprehension, much in the way that a baby still in the womb doesn't yet know her mother's arms. So, I don't expect to arrive at a full sense of the reality beyond this earthy one. However, I have some images of afterlife that do speak to my heart.

Heaven? God is perfection. God is completion. God is love. And so, where God is, that must be heaven. Our burdens will be laid down. We will be gathered up into that love and into that eternal peace. We will be at-one with God. We will be reconciled to God, and to one another. We will be with our loved ones who have gone before us. We will, at last, have found the unity--the wholeness--we seek. We will be home.

As for hell, I have an image of that too, and it terrifies me. It has to do with alternatives not chosen that should have been, good choices neglected, roads not taken that led where God was trying to lead. My image of hell has to do with suddenly, suddenly, coming to consciousness about what should have been and wasn't, because we were tired, or careless, or filled with apathy, or caught in tangled webs of our own weaving. My image of hell is being shown the alternative futures that weren't. The visions of possibilities that never were realized, the relationships that were shattered, destroyed, because of selfishness, or indifference, or the need to control. My image of hell is seeing the tree that should have grown, and the fruit harvested from the seeds God planted, and we failed to tend. My image of hell is seeing the wonderful woman who never grew up because the child died of starvation, or a sniper's bullet. My image of hell is seeing the family that might have been woven together in love, that on this earth fell apart, was ripped apart by fighting, and drowned in alcohol. My image of hell is being forever separated from God, no more chances, and knowing what might have been: the alternative future, the love, the joy that God intended for me to have.

This image, for me, is utterly terrifying. To think that my loving God, who made me and tended me and sent first the Son, and then the Spirit, to think that I have failed God, that I have failed to go where I was being led, that can bring me to my knees. It is an image, truly, an image of hell!

Of course, I pray this is not my eternal future. I pray I am faithfully looking for the hand of God, that I am not blind to the road being pointed out to me. I think we all pray for this. We need to be careful. Our problem, our human condition, is that we see what we want to see and we too easily

believe what we want to believe, what feels comfortable.

The House of Bishops is greatly blessed by two very gifted chaplains: Martin Smith, the Superior of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, and Curtis Almquist, the Senior Brother. At a meeting in December of the House of Bishops Planning Committee, Brother Curtis, in one of his meditations, spoke of a fascinating study on human perception. Research has shown that what people actually see is most influenced by what they have already decided to be and what they have already decided to see. Our eyes don't just pick up information and send it to our brains. What our eyes see accounts for only twenty percent of what we use to create perception. At least eighty percent of what the brain works with is information that is already there. In other words, we each create our own worlds by what we choose to notice.

As Brother Curtis said, we create "a world of order and distinctions that makes sense to us, that preserves our sense of reality, that preserves the image we have of ourselves. We then 'see' the world through this self we have created, and we take only selected amounts of new information from the outside to piece together our own particular version of reality."

I find this absolutely fascinating, and it rings true, I'm afraid. It reminds me of a story a friend told me. She lived in New York and had become accustomed to the sight of people sleeping on cardboard boxes on the sidewalk, even in winter. In fact, not far from her apartment, someone had set up housekeeping in a large cardboard box, the kind that a refrigerator comes in. Well, one weekend she was visiting in a very pleasant suburban community and as she and her host drove down a tree-lined street, she saw a large cardboard box in front of one of the houses. She said to him, "Look, someone is living in front of that house." He was puzzled, of course, but almost as soon as the words were out of her mouth she remembered where she was. She realized the difference between what she had seen, and what she first thought she had seen, because she had expected to see it. In fact, the people who lived in that house had gotten a new refrigerator and put the box out front to be picked up in the trash collection.... There are no people living in boxes in that suburban community. But, in her brain, a large box had become a possible home.

We see what we expect to see. We see what we want to see. We believe what we want to believe. We take in information that serves our own particular version of reality. And, this, this is why we need each other. We each have our piece of the truth. We each have our screens and blinders. Only by sharing our images can we begin to see a larger vision, a fuller reality, and how God is calling us into the future. Only by being in community can we live into the possibilities God is preparing. Together we have a better chance of making the right choices, putting aside the lesser alternatives.

As individuals, as communities of people, as a nation and as a church we are confronted with choices all the time, paths to follow, paths to ignore. As we approach our General Convention in Philadelphia this is very much on my mind.

In the middle of January, a meeting took place in Philadelphia in preparation for General Convention. The President of the House of Deputies and I did something I don't believe has ever been done before. We called together our two Councils of Advice to talk about how the mind of the church could be expressed in the most, creative, healthy possible way through our legislative process.

We began with two assumptions. First, that we honor the legislative process and trust the working of the Spirit through the process. Second, that our General Convention is more than a legislative body. It is as well a community of people who live under the discipline of the gospel, who are called to serve God's people, and who have been given the ministry of reconciliation.

Our two councils met over the better part of two days with a good cross-section of lay and clerical deputies and bishops. Pam and I agree that it was an excellent meeting, and the participants all shared that assessment. We left with a heightened sense of positive expectation about our



convention and a feeling that the decisions made there will be made carefully and faithfully. We are in the process of preparing a brief letter to all bishops and deputies about this meeting, and we will see that Council members receive a copy as well.

Some tough issues are coming before our convention. And we have some polarization around these issues. There is also a perception out there, particularly held by those at the ends of the spectrum of opinion, that at this convention we will decide, that at this convention possible alternative futures will disappear, and one clear answer will emerge. Well, I will leave it to you to think about the accuracy of this perception. I will have more to say about this as we move closer to convention.

For now, I want to say this: if I took one word out of our meeting in Philadelphia, if I took one word to meditate on and to pray about it was reconciliation. Reconciliation.

I think the operative question for Christians is: do you choose reconciliation, or division? They offer alternative futures. Which do you choose?

The answer should be quite simple. Our God is a God of reconciliation. We are thus called to the work of reconciliation. God as revealed in Jesus is a God of reconciliation. Even the weeds that had been sown with the good seeds were to be left until the harvest, not divided out. We do not separate the sheep and the goats. God's work is a work of reconciliation, and reconciliation is something that is always happening.

We are following Jesus who is the Way, not the rule, not the resolution, not the canon but the Way, and the Truth and the Life, whose ministry was always one of invitation, not of rules and answers.

Now, how do we take this and live it in our lives? How do we make our choices and choose our futures? How do we, please God, save ourselves from the terror of one day, in eternity, coming to know the glory that could have been, and will never be?

Of course, there is no one answer to this question. However, I believe we have several choices in front of us as a church right now that present alternative futures. I believe we have some opportunities to say: Yes. Yes. We choose reconciliation, not division. I will name three such opportunities. They have to do with our understanding of stewardship, of our sense of the role of the church in our national life, and of our efforts against racism.

First, our stewardship. The Administration and Finance Committee along with staff met with several members of the Program, Budget and Finance Committee earlier this month to prepare for this meeting. They discussed the budget for the next triennium and the funding required. The data they reviewed indicated that giving to parishes, and from parishes to dioceses, has risen steadily over the past several years. During that same period, diocesan support to our General Convention budget has remained steady or gone down.

Why is this? We have some answers about changing patterns in the church that need to be understood and addressed. One pattern is the large percentage of people who join the church from other denominations, or who were previously unchurched. These new Episcopalians don't have much knowledge of church structure or Anglican tradition. They may have little interest in either, and have joined the church for a variety of other good reasons. They may be very faithful members of their local parish, but not see themselves as members of a broader fellowship, or the need to support that common mission. They have yet to capture a vision of the partnership we are called to at all levels in the life of our church.

Also, the changing patterns in our national life reverberate in the church and other institutions as well. We are mired in a time of self-interest. The government itself seems to be losing a sense of responsibility for the common good and the general welfare. This is a tremendously unhealthy sign. It leads to a future where a nation models just the opposite of all Jesus came to teach us. In such a time, is it not our responsibility as followers of Jesus to show a different way? Is it not our responsibility to

pull together and live and show the values of the covenant community? Of the alternative futures, I have no question which I pray we choose.

During this meeting, we will grapple with choices about the spending of funds, and also with the fact that we don't have the funds to do what we believe we are called to do. Of all the reasons for this, the most painful reason is that several dioceses are withholding funds from our mission program as a way of making a political statement. This is poor stewardship based on flawed theology. The fact that the money may be used for other worthy things doesn't make it any better. Christian giving is not a sign of approval but a mark of love. It is a following of the example of Jesus. The withholding of funds as a form of protest is contrary to our received understanding of what it means to live in a covenant community, a community where reconciliation is the way, not division. There have been disagreements within church bodies since the beginnings of the church. That is unlikely to change. How we live in the struggle, how we use the tension in ways that are healthy, that is what we must choose. Is it to be reconciliation, or division? That's the choice.

Of course, where does the Executive Council come in here? I think our decision to visit the dioceses was creative and productive. Our visits were a source of enormous encouragement to us all. We can't tell the dioceses what to do, but we can let them know that we--and when I say we I mean the elected leaders of the church who have fiduciary responsibility--we are with them. We are listening. We are honoring the struggles they engage in to make their own choices, and we are showing the path of reconciliation. We must continue in dialogue. We must show that our vision of partnership in mission must be reflected in our budgets.

Another choice, a critical one: what is the role of the church in the world? I believe, and I pray you agree, that we can see the church is called to usher in the reign of God for these times, which means a commitment to issues of peace and justice. The church is not an island separate from the world. The church is to serve the world: God's creation. Yes, we have a choice. We can live the gospel values of love, compassion, healing, peace and reconciliation, or we can sit by quietly while the forces of greed, violence, suffering, oppression and injustice do their evil work. It is our choice. The choices lead to very different futures. Where do we want to go? Where do we want to go?

Our country has just installed a Republican Congress and inaugurated a Democrat as president. There is the possibility of more gridlock in Washington. I have heard of efforts in both parties to work on reconciliation. Let us wish them well. Trust in our government must be restored because trust is the glue that holds us, the diverse citizens of this nation, together in some sense of a common life, in some sense of the common good. Without the trust that unifies us, we fall into every man for himself, every woman for herself, and let the children just take care of themselves. And I say again, it is the responsibility of those who follow Jesus to show another way, to exhibit the marks of the covenant community.

Whatever hope we may have for the future, and as Christians we are people of hope, the last two years have seen an erosion of our nation's concern for the poor. This is another sign of our national forgetfulness of the general welfare. We were already in trouble and then came the so-called welfare reform that now threatens to flood our nation's streets with more unemployed and homeless people. Looking abroad we find devastating foreign aid cuts.

At home, the issues of assisted suicide, the death penalty, and abortion are being debated. Moral issues all. And these debates are being carried out often in a tone of rancor, in a climate of moral decay, and in a spirit of political expedience. The church's voice needs to be heard in these national discussions. I am not talking partisan politics. I am saying that the insights of our faith need to be brought to the table. Our Washington Office is doing an important work in helping us to be heard in the corridors of power, but they can't be truly effective unless the importance of this witness is well understood around the church.



While I am speaking of abortion I want to say for the record why I supported President Clinton's veto of what is called by its opponents "the partial birth amendment," which is abortion in the last trimester of pregnancy. First, I did it because it affirms the position of General Convention that this church does not believe in legislation that would abridge the decision of a woman's access to medically safe abortion. Secondly, I supported the veto because it would have removed the right of a woman to an abortion where her health was threatened. Abortion in the last trimester is rare, and certainly not to be supported unless the health of the mother or the viability of the fetus is at stake. I regret that there are voices in the church which would suggest that I would support such an action under any other circumstance. Abortion is always a tragedy, and the agonizing decisions around it are appropriately left to the woman, her priest, doctor and family, not the government. That is the position of the church and I stand by it.

On February 27-March 1, the President of the House of Deputies and I, along with members of this Council, will return to this city, to this same hotel, for the Justice Summit. I hope this will be a time when Episcopalians from all over the country can affirm the centrality of justice for the life and mission of the church. Too often this work is assigned to a committee for people who care about these kinds of things, as if peace and justice were optional activities for Christians. But, I pray this Justice Summit will in some way call us back and challenge us that this work is at the very heart of who we are and what we are meant to do.

Judy Conley, Earl Cavanaugh and Fran Toy from this Council will be among those who will attend the Summit. Their assignment will be to bring back a report and possible recommendations to the April meeting of Council. What we decide then may have ramifications for Council's presentation to the General Convention.

Whatever the outcome of the Justice Summit, I continue to give deep thanks for those in our church who have shown an unwavering commitment to peace and justice issues. Without a quest for love, peace, justice, and reconciliation, God's people will sorely suffer. Without a vision, the people perish.

I hope my voice, and the work of many of my staff over these past eleven years, has made a difference, however small, to the life of our country and the life of our church. Until my last day in this office I will continue to do all I can to proclaim the values of the reign of God. And, I will continue to challenge the church to join me in this holy task. When we ask why we would engage such issues, the answer is: Jesus passed this way.

Do we choose division, or reconciliation? Our choice means vastly different alternative futures, especially when we think of the sin of racism, which is the ultimate division. As our nation honored Dr. King this year, our church began a new way of rooting out the sin of racism that lies within us and sickens our very body. First reports are just now coming in on our churchwide dialogues. Let me share with you just one example which is right from this diocese. The people of St. Andrew's church here sponsored a community forum using the materials provided through our Anti-Racism Task Force. More than 75 people from a cross-section of races and ethnicities and economic, educational and denominational backgrounds participated in a two-hour program of panel discussion and open forums.

The discussions were energetic with a high degree of participation. People told their stories of how racism has effected their lives, and of their hopes for the future. This is one small example of how we as followers of Jesus must show the way against racism.

No matter what else we do within the life of our church, no matter how much we try to reflect the covenant community, no matter how many positive choices we make, as long as we are victims of our own racism everything else we do is tainted. That is a strong statement but I mean it to the bottom of my heart. We are consciously choosing, intellectually committed to, the eradication of

racism from our church and our society. We must reflect this choice in every other choice we make. If we don't we are victims not only of racism but of our own hypocrisy.

Surely one of the benefits of the proposed Concordat of Agreement for Full Communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is that together our efforts against racism will have greater power. The concern for an inclusive community is at the center of the ELCA's life. Our two churches share a common understanding of the community to which Christ invites us. We need to keep this front and center as we study the implications of the Concordat.

What a hell on that judgement day to be forced to confront the beautiful future we could have made, free of racism, and to know we had not done it. Instead of seeing the dream of Dr. King, we would see the nightmare of our own indifference. I am encouraged by the progress we have made, but let us not grow weary. We have a long way to go.

My dear sisters, brothers, fellow pilgrims, you who walk this path with me: I realize I have spoken to you for a long time this morning. I had a lot to say. I am coming to know that there is something precious to me in these final such opportunities. I feel a certain urgency to share with you what I can, to be for you all I can, and to be with you all we can be together, all for the sake of the gospel.

Right now, we are choosing our future. Out of God's gift of free will, we are making choices, taking one road and leaving others behind. We are on a journey in faith, from what is to what will be. Guided by our baptismal covenant, emboldened by the love of God, we choose from alternative futures. In this middle time, let us be on fire with the possibilities. Let us be courageous, of good heart. Let us be guided by the example of Jesus, who lived reconciliation, not division. Who lived justice, not oppression. Who lived community and wholeness, not fragmentation and brokenness. Who lived compassion and not indifference. Surely, following in that holy path we will, together, find our way to the Kingdom, to the eternal vision of the blessed face of Christ.

**The Most Rev. Edmond L. Browning**  
**Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church**

97-1695

## **Address from the vice chair to the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church, Cincinnati, Ohio, January 28, 1997**

"Civility," as Ellen Goodman noted in a column earlier this month, "is all the rage." All sorts of people are commenting on the *need* for it--the *lack* of it--in church and society, in public and private, in the halls of Congress and church conventions, on the highways and across the supermarket check-out counter and over the airwaves, in schools and around kitchen tables and even over coffee in the parish hall.

When I was growing up, and for most of my adulthood, I lived in a world where standards of polite behavior were known, shared, accepted and honored. Violations, when they occurred, were shockingly offensive and rewarded with scorn, ostracism and a kind of pulling in of the community to protect itself against destructive interactions. Today, "shock jocks" make big money on radio, vulgarity and insult pass for humor on the sitcoms, and every day political and religious leaders



substitute personal invective for reasoned persuasion in seeking support for their causes.

Have we become a nation of rude people, a church community without simple manners? What is going on here? And how should we respond to this state of affairs--as Christians called to "respect the dignity of every human being," and as Episcopalians approaching a General Convention that promises more than the usual share of contentious issues?

Sociologists and historians could probably list dozens of factors contributing to our present concern about "civility." Today I'd like to look at just two, and invite you to think with me about what God may be calling us to do about them:

- First, there is the connection between what we call "civility" and "consensus"--the shared view that arises from common experience, perspectives, interests and values within a community;
- Second, there is fear, and its profoundly destructive effects on behavior and human interaction.

### **Civility and consensus**

It's no secret that standards of behavior vary from place to place, culture to culture, century to century. What was polite in the 18th century French court would seem odd in this 20th century Cincinnati hotel. Good manners in Maine might seem abrupt and rude in Georgia; midwestern friendliness can appear intrusive or threatening in a New York subway.

To some degree, how we ought to behave toward each other is situational. It is relative, conditioned by external factors along with our internal disposition. It's okay (apparently) to scream "Kill 'em" in the excitement of the Super Bowl, but not in the middle of the House of Deputies. In some churches, blue jeans and sneakers are perfectly acceptable while in others violation of a more formal dress code would be taken as a sign of disrespect for God and the community.

Knowing the difference, being able to judge which behaviors are appropriate in which situations, depends on sharing a lot of assumptions and expectations, many of them so ingrained in our upbringing that they remain quite unconscious. As long as we all have the same upbringing, things work out pretty well. We know automatically how to behave properly, and are likely to be offensive to others only when we lose our tempers, or--occasionally--when we're deliberately rude to make some sort of a point. As long as we all have the same upbringing. Now there's the rub.

Public life in this country used to be the preserve of the upper class, who did share most of the same upbringing, values, interests and assumptions. Today, universal education and mass communication seem to have turned public life into a tower of Babel.

Life in the Episcopal Church used to be--or we imagine that it used to be--essentially the upper class at prayer, snug in our box pews. Stately liturgies with their Elizabethan cadences defined our way of worshipping, and of being with each other. We didn't cry out, "Amen, sister!" in the middle of worship, and we didn't raise our voices at each other in vestry meetings or General Convention. There were disagreements aplenty, and Anglican history is as full of behind-the-scenes backstabblings--now mostly figurative--as any other. But publicly we were genteel. We were polite.

We behaved "decently and in order" because we shared an understanding of what "order" and "decency" were. It was a sort of Victorian understanding, filtered by Boston Brahmins and Southern gentlemen, and it held for a long time. It was strong enough--that behavioral consensus--to keep our ecclesial community essentially intact despite battles over candles and incense, slavery and temperance, suffrage and divorce.

Let other denominations thunder denunciations from pulpits and break into splinter groups right and left, north and south, orthodox and reformed. We prized civility and were rewarded with unity, we avoided open conflict and escaped schism. Or so it seems, if we politely ignore the Reformed Episcopal Church schism of 1873, and the "continuing church" groups that have broken

away since 1977. The *via media*, the middle where the broad consensus held, was wide enough and strong enough that we could let those modest schismatic exceptions prove the rule.

### **The loss of consensus and the rise of fear**

Now, we are not so confident about the consensus. The Episcopal Church is no longer made up predominately of Boston Brahmins and Southern gentlemen with long Anglican memories and good Victorian manners. Voices previously unheard are speaking up, groups previously excluded are claiming a place in the Body of Christ. We wonder uneasily if that comfortable old "consensus" might actually have been the preferences of a privileged few imposed on everyone else.

Who gets to decide what it means to be "Anglican" or "Episcopal"? Who sets the rules for the debate? The civility that depended on shared experiences, interests and assumptions is stretched to the breaking point, and we feel very threatened. We are assailed by fears:

- fear of change;
- the anxiety of facing the unknown;
- apprehension about a future we cannot see;
- anticipatory grieving for what has been familiar and safe as we sense it slipping from our grasp;
- panic because we don't know what to do.

All these afflict the body politic and the church. Adrenaline surges, muscles tense, we prepare for fight or flight. It's hard to be civil when you are afraid.

So what might God be calling us to do in this situation?

I wonder if we may have been looking in the wrong places for the consensus that can sustain us in this millennial time of foreboding and change. Jesus didn't say, "always be polite and things will work out." He said, "love each other," "heal the sick," "feed my sheep." He said, "repent" "give away your treasure," "your sins are forgiven." He wasn't always polite, he was not afraid to give offense, his behavior sometimes scandalized.

### **Redefining "civility"**

We need to refresh our understanding of "civility" which has never been just about politeness and seemly behavior, but about being good citizens. In our case that means being good citizens of the kingdom of God:

- speaking the truth, in love;
- bearing one another's burdens;
- not obsessing about the speck in our neighbor's eye while ignoring the log in our own;
- remembering that what weakens one weakens all, and vice versa;
- being willing to lay down our lives.

I believe psychologists call it a *folie a deux* when two parties share a delusion that keeps them locked in a pattern of crazy behavior. We risk succumbing to such a folly if we approach this summer's General Convention as a conflict between two warring parties, a do-or-die confrontation between--choose your labels--traditionalists and progressives, conservatives and liberals, orthodoxy and the *via media*, the synod and the feminists, episcopal polity versus congregationalism.

If we go to Philadelphia expecting a showdown with winners and losers, we'll certainly get one, and it will be a colossal folly resulting from a great shared delusion, a consensus of fear. If we



go to Philadelphia intent on one particular outcome--however earnest and conscientious our commitments may be--we will short-circuit the legislative process and undermine the peace and unity of the church.

This is easy to forget because we often think of the legislative process as a sort of civilized warfare: those who marshal the greatest electoral force can compel the rest to submit. Certainly it can be used in this way, and often is, in secular government as in the church.

But suppose we reframe the process. Suppose we see the legislative process not as civilized warfare--in which all the parties know from the start what territory they want to protect or reclaim--but as collaborative exploration, seeking an as-yet-unrecognized pathway through unfamiliar territory. Suppose we suspend our convictions long enough to listen for new clues about the path ahead, allowing for some new consensus that might embrace our present contradictions.

Seen this way, the legislative process offers an orderly method for sharing information from scouts exploring in several different directions, testing it against our collective experience and wisdom, and making incremental decisions about next steps. It is in this sense that the legislative process can be the venue of the Holy Spirit's action within the Church. We are not totally on our own. We are not left to our own devices, jostling for position in fear of plunging into some ghastly pit. The territory is unfamiliar, but we are accompanied by one who has plumbed the abyss of death and returned in glory, promising to be with us always.

The Risen Christ does not promise easy agreements or simple solutions. Trusting the guidance of the Holy Spirit does not automatically cast out fear of the unknown. It is still hard work, with no guarantees. We will be exhausted when we leave Philadelphia. But let us struggle to recover the civility of the pure in heart, knowing it is essential to our souls and to the life of this church.

It is a struggle, because we hunger for Truth with a capital "T" but fear disaster if we don't hold fast to the glimpse of truth we have already been given. Let me close with an image I have found comforting as we prepare to take council together this summer. It comes from an Epiphany sermon by Dr. Margaret Guenther of General Seminary. Speaking of the journey of the magi, she reminded listeners that "you cannot see the star that shows the way unless you are willing to go into the night." We cannot see the star unless we go into the night, and we must leave behind our flashlights and our little torches--all our individual glimpses of truth because they will only blind us to the fullness of Truth God has prepared for us.

This is the path to the reconciliation God wills--not facing each other in resolute dialogue determined to reach agreement at any cost, but walking side by side toward the One who reconciles all through the Peace that passes understanding.

Pray for this Peace, sisters and brothers, and civility will surely follow. Thank you.

**Pamela P. Chinnis**  
**President of the House of Deputies**





## *reviews and resources*

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### **Thirteen/WNET to air national weekly program on religious news**

The New York public television station Thirteen/WNET in New York recently received two grants totalling \$5 million from Lilly Endowment Inc. to produce a first-of-its-kind weekly news program on religion and ethics. Focusing on one of the most under-reported news beats in journalism today, *Religion Newsweekly* (working title) will provide in-depth coverage of the top stories of the week relating to religion and ethics, as well as religious and ethical perspectives on domestic and foreign events. The first season of 39 half-hour programs debuts this summer on PBS. "The U.S. is, increasingly, a nation of many faiths, and religious beliefs are driving international events," said host Bob Abernathy. "As more Americans report they are searching for spiritual experience, our program will be a window on the most interesting people, events, and ideas of this vast and fundamental part of life." In conjunction with the series' premiere, *Religion Newsweekly* will be available online on the World Wide Web at <http://www.wnet.org> and <http://www.pbs.org>. Previews of the stories scheduled for coverage each week will be listed, and transcripts and video downloads from recent reports will be available. A calendar of upcoming events in various faith traditions will be posted, and online users will be invited to contribute story ideas. In addition, Thirteen/WNET's educational publishing department will develop a viewer's guide to encourage family or group viewing. This 24-page guide will include essays on topics raised in the series, and suggestions for continuing dialogue. The guide will be made available to the public free of charge.

### **Lectures on Concordat by Lutheran theologians published**

(ENS) The January, 1997, issue of *The Anglican* features lectures by three prominent Lutheran theologians on the proposed Concordat of Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Episcopal Church. The lectures were delivered as the 1996 Paddock Lectures at The General Theological Seminary in New York. The issue also includes the official revised text of the proposed Concordat. Copies of this issue are available for \$3 each, but prospective members/subscribers may have a copy for \$1. Checks should be made payable to "The Anglican Society" and sent to Rev. Victor L. Austin, Editor, P.O. Box 148, Hopewell Jct., NY 12533-0148.

### **President Clinton's Bible now on display**

(ENS) President Clinton recently loaned the Bible upon which he took his oath of office on January 20 to Washington National Cathedral. The Bible is now on display as the



centerpiece of the Cathedral's exhibition "So Help Me God! Presidential Prayer and Presence." This exhibit, commemorating the 53rd inaugural of the President of the United States, includes several presidential prayers, and documents the presence at the Cathedral of presidents from McKinley through Clinton during times of national mourning and celebration. "So Help Me God!" is open to the public Mondays through Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. through August 28. Admission is free. Call (202) 537-6200 for more information.

### **Resource on uprooted peoples published**

(ENS) The World Council of Churches (WCC) has produced a resource book, *A Moment to Choose: Risking to be with Uprooted People*, a study of the situation of refugees and internally displaced and migrant peoples. "Uprooted people have become manifestations of worldwide economic and social failures to meet basic human needs of people and protect human dignity," the book declares. The book aims to help policy makers and academics as well as all who wish to understand the causes and consequences of the forced displacement of peoples and then challenge the churches to prophetic and practical responses that promote human dignity and sustainable communities. Review copies of the resource book can be obtained from WCC, Unit IV, Sharing and Service, Refugee and Migration Service, Telephone 41-22-791-6318 or 6320; Fax 788-0067; E-mail [hm@wcc.coe.org](mailto:hm@wcc.coe.org) or [pt@wcc-coe.org](mailto:pt@wcc-coe.org). Single copies will be provided without charge to church groups. Copies are available for sale to the public and other organizations.

### **Diocese of Connecticut offers wooden crosses**

(ENS) As part of a "pure evangelistic undertaking," the Diocese of Connecticut is distributing small wooden crosses made by Christian Palestinians from olive wood. According to Alinda Stanley, chair of the diocese's evangelism committee, "the crosses have filled a great need here in Connecticut, to provide a simple, powerful tool for Episcopalians to witness to the power of Christ's love for the world." The wooden crosses are available at cost (\$.30), and the diocese's evangelism committee has volunteered to count, package and mail the crosses, which are shipped to Connecticut from Israel in bulk lots. If you have questions about the program or want to order, contact Laird Mortimer at 860-408-1539, or write to him at P.O. Box 571, Tariffville, CT 06081-0571.

### **Photographs available in this issue of ENS:**

1. Southern Ohio offers hospitality to Executive Council (97-1686)\*
2. An irreverent trip through Southern Ohio history (97-1686)\*
3. Reporting on recommended changes to Episcopal Church structure (97-1686)\*
4. Liberian priest's family reunited (97-1693)

\* This photo is available in color.

**Tentative mailing dates for future ENS releases are March 6 and March 27.**

**The Episcopal News Service is available electronically. QUEST users can join the "Episcopal News Service" meeting to receive full versions of all stories or join "ENS Digest" to receive the digest versions of our news stories. Web users can visit the official Episcopal Church website at [www.ecusa.anglican.org](http://www.ecusa.anglican.org).**